

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson*****Laying the Framework for the Task Ahead:
An Examination of the Department of Homeland
Security's Quadrennial Homeland Security Review***

April 29, 2010 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Management, Investigations, and Oversight Subcommittee hearing entitled “Laying the Framework for the Task Ahead: An Examination of the Department of Homeland Security’s Quadrennial Homeland Security Review”:

“Since September 11, 2001, this Nation has grappled with the question of how to secure our homeland. Many strides have been made in an effort to answer this question and to ensure that the American people are as secure as possible.

Almost four years after September 11th, in August 2005, over 1,800 people died as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

And just last week, my district experienced what some have called the most devastating storm to hit the State of Mississippi since Hurricane Katrina, when tornados and winds exceeding 170 miles per hour left a path of death and destruction affecting more than eleven counties.

To the Department’s credit, responses to natural disasters and our efforts to prevent terrorist attacks within the United States are better and constantly improving.

However, in order to ensure that we are on the right path, to a safer, more secure and more resilient America, we must have a plan. In the Implementing the Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007, Congress recognized the need for this plan.

As a result, we mandated that the Department of Homeland Security outline its long-term strategy and priorities for homeland security in the form of a Quadrennial Homeland Security Review, or QHSR, which was to be submitted to Congress in December 2009, and every four years thereafter.

This is a model that has proven to be helpful for the Department of Defense and it was anticipated that the Department, and the Nation as a whole, would equally benefit from the Department of Homeland Security’s effort.

I found it troubling that the Department missed the December 2009 deadline. I am aware, however, that this Administration had to pick up where the last Administration left off and much of the work that should have been completed had yet to be performed.

Nevertheless, I must note that on numerous occasions, we were told by the past Administration, and the current, that it would be delivered on time.

Unfortunately, it was not.

I do understand, however, that the timing of the QHSR with the Presidential transition may have contributed to the new Administration's delay, and I look forward to receiving testimony from the witnesses concerning their opinion on the most optimal timing for subsequent Quadrennial Homeland Security Reviews.

Despite the missed deadline, I was pleased to see that the QHSR establishes a strategic framework that can serve as a guide for not only the Department, but State, local, tribal and territorial governments as well as the private sector.

In particular, the QHSR describes critical homeland security threats, hazards, global challenges and trends, such as: the high consequence of weapons of mass destruction; the ongoing concerns regarding Al Qaeda and other terrorist networks; the potential for cyber attacks; and the impact of pandemics, major accidents and natural hazards.

Moreover, the QHSR devotes an entire section to cybersecurity – finally giving priority status to this important aspect of our homeland security mission.

Along those same lines, the QHSR devotes special attention to the concept of resiliency and focuses on the fact that resilience to disasters should serve as the backbone of our preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

Furthermore, it highlights the fact that privacy, civil rights and civil liberties should never take a back seat in any of our homeland security policies, missions or objectives.

Including these principles should set our country on safer, more secure footing as we utilize the QHSR as the framework that guides the homeland security mission.

On the other hand, there were many aspects of the statutory requirements that were not reflected in the report. To that end, I fully expect to hear from the Deputy Secretary regarding the Department's plans to fully satisfy its statutory obligation.

Most notably, the QHSR should have contained the results of the Department's assessment of its organizational structure, and its systems for management, budget and accounting, human resources, procurement, and physical and technical infrastructure.

Given the Department's challenges in these areas, which include: staff shortages in its acquisition workforce; a financial management system that has never received a clean audit; a personnel system that is outsourced to large private sector corporations; procurements that proceed without proper oversight; and inadequate physical and technical capabilities, the Department cannot afford to overlook this vital assessment.

The Committee has been informed that this analysis will be reflected in the Department's Bottom-up Review, referred to as the BUR.

Well, I have not seen the BUR, which, at this juncture is also later than expected.

So, while I applaud the Department for carrying out the herculean effort of completing its first Quadrennial Homeland Security Review and setting forth a solid framework for the task ahead, I must also express my concern regarding its failure to fully meet the statutory requirements."

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